Access
News on WCB products, programs, and services
March 2002

TOOLS ONLINE

Self-serve registration available 24/7

The WCB is responding to employers' needs for fast, client-focused products with the March launch of the new Employer Self-Serve Registration tool. The tool guides employers through a series of screens to determine their eligibility and classification, allowing eligible employers to register in about half an hour. The user-friendly, interactive tool located at **www.worksafebc.com** is one of a planned set of Internet products aimed at employers who want to streamline their business with the WCB and take advantage of the quick turnaround and convenience made possible through the Internet.

Visit our web site for more information about Employer Self-Serve Registration and stay tuned for future online products available at **www.worksafebc.com**.

New criteria for multiple classifications

Effective January 1, 2002, an updated multiple classification policy is in place. The policy provides greater clarity to ensure assessment rates do not give one firm an advantage over its direct competitors. If your firm is involved in more than one industrial activity, there is now clearer criteria for establishing whether you should be assigned more than one classification. Your firm may be assigned multiple classifications if the following criteria are satisfied:

- Each industrial activity must be separate and distinct so that it doesn't contribute to the risk of injury or occupational disease in another industrial activity.
- Each activity must not be ancillary to the employer's main activity — that is, one activity must not exist solely to support the employer's main industry.
- At least 50 percent of the product or service from the industrial activity must be sold to unaffiliated customers or clients.
- Each industrial activity must generate annual assessable earnings of at least four times the maximum wage rate (maximum wage rate for 2002 is $59,600) or at least 25 percent of the gross annual assessable earnings of all business activities combined, or generate annual revenue that is at least 25 percent of the gross annual revenue.

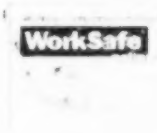
The multiple classification policy can be reviewed online in the Assessment policy manual at **www.worksafebc.com**. If you have questions, call the Employer Service Centre at **604 244-6181**, or toll-free at **1 888 922-2768**.

Web redesigned for ease of use

To help you do business with the WCB more quickly and easily, the Board has redesigned and reorganized our WorkSafe™ Online web site at **www.worksafebc.com**.

The new site features a simplified design that allows pages to be downloaded quickly, which particularly helps users with slower Internet connections. The reduced clutter and improved organization make it easier to find the information you need.

As always, you'll find resources like the Health & Safety Centre and convenient applications for checking claim status, obtaining clearance letters, and reporting incidents and injuries. The site also contains several new features, including an advanced search tool, a Site Help section, and a glossary of commonly used terms.



The new WorkSafe online was created with significant stakeholder involvement and it is a work in progress. Your feedback will help us ensure that the site meets your needs. If you would like to submit a comment or suggestion, use the Feedback link located at the bottom of most pages.

Smoking regulations revised

On January 16, 2002, the provincial government announced revised health and safety regulations to manage workers' exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in B.C.'s hospitality industry. The revised regulations are effective May 1, 2002, and require employers in public entertainment facilities such as restaurants, bars, pubs, casinos, and bingo halls to manage their workers' exposure to environmental tobacco smoke through one of the following options:

- Prohibiting smoking at the worksite
- Restricting smoking to a designated smoking area such as a safe, outdoor location or a designated smoking room that is structurally separate from other work areas

Under the revised regulations, hospitality workers will have the right to choose whether to enter a designated smoking room and may not be discriminated against if they choose not to enter such a room. Other notable features of the revised regulations include:

- Workers can choose to enter a designated smoking room intermittently to perform their duties up to 20 percent of a work shift in a 24-hour day.
- Workstations cannot be located in a designated smoking room.
- Designated smoking rooms in premises licensed for the sale of liquor must be structurally separate from other work areas and can be no more than 45 percent of the total floor space in hospitality settings and no more than 65 percent in bingo halls.
- Air from designated smoking rooms must be ventilated directly to the outside or cleaned through a system that meets minimum standards of efficiency noted in the regulations and ensures that the airflow moves from the non-smoking areas into the designated smoke rooms.

Detailed information will be mailed to hospitality establishments in March. Information is also available on the WCB's web site at **www.worksafebc.com** or by calling your local WCB office.

Misreporting costs everyone

A recent series of audits revealed that a significant number of employers are misreporting the nature of their business and/or the amount of their assessable payroll.

Whether done intentionally or in error, such misreporting often leads to underpayment, which causes serious and costly inequities for other employers who end up subsidizing the system. Employers who don't pay their fair share of assessments also face hefty penalties from the WCB.

In order to comply with the legislation and avoid the consequences of misreporting, follow these steps:

- Register your business with the WCB under the appropriate industry classification before workers are hired or contracted out.
- Report all forms of payroll, including wages and salaries, commissions and bonuses, holiday pay, subcontractors' earnings when the subcontractor is not registered with the WCB, and shareholders' earnings when the shareholder is active in operating the company.
- Accurately report payroll and pay assessments when due. Employers who are required to pay $500 or more in premiums a year must report and pay assessments on a quarterly basis.

To learn more about your responsibilities, visit the WCB's web site at **www.worksafebc.com**, or contact the Employer Service Centre at **604 244-6181**, toll-free at **1 888 922-2768**.

Regulation Matters
Recent amendments

Several sections of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation have been amended, effective January 28, 2002. These amendments are part of an ongoing review of the Regulation and arose from public hearings held last year.

The changes were made to clarify sections of the Regulation, provide certain exceptions, and allow for changing technology. Each amendment generally concerns a small segment of industry.

Amendments cover the following topics:

General
- Deletion of references to professional geoscientists
- Standards for older equipment

Specific substances
- Additional options for asbestos cleanup
- Clarifying that ammonia is a toxic process gas

Confined spaces
- Allowing gas-pressurized fire extinguishers
- Removal of welding hoses

Fall protection
- Use of commercially available horizontal lifeline systems

Tools, machinery, and equipment
- Cleanup of used abrasive blasting materials
- Allowing foot-operated jetting guns or equivalent
- Additional options for ventilation in welding operations

Work platforms
- Clarifying requirements for level indicators on elevating work platforms

Mobile equipment
- Clarifying requirements for warning devices
- Allowing parabolic or flat mirrors on forklifts
- Allowing grandfathering of windows in older equipment
- Exempting swampers on garbage trucks from using fall restraint in certain circumstances

Diving
- Clarifying the obligation to post notices for a project

Forestry
- Clarifying requirements for guylines and running lines
- Specifications for bulkboards on logging trucks
- Heel bars on self-loading logging trucks

Printed copies of the amendments are available through WCB Publications and Videos. To order, call **604 276-3068**, toll-free in B.C. at **1 800 661-2112**, local **3068**, fax **604 279-7406**, or e-mail **pubvid@wcb.bc.ca**.

The amendments are also available through WorkSafe Online. To view or print these online documents, visit the "Regulation" section of the Health and Safety Centre on our web site at **www.worksafebc.com**.

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This newsletter is also available electronically on the WCB web site, WorkSafe Online, at **www.worksafebc.com/publications/newsletters/access/**. Look for the next issue in June, 2002.

WorkSafe

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

Communications Services
Workers' Compensation Board of B.C.
PO Box 5350 Stn Terminal
Vancouver BC V6B 5L5